

Almost 50 years later, Sylvia's has become the landmark of 126th St. and Lenox Avenue and the one place where everyone knows they can get a taste of authentic Southern Soul food. The restaurant also serves to remind the community's residents that hard work, determination, and love of family can lead to success.

Sylvia's Restaurant, a Harlem soul-food landmark, attracts busloads of tourists from all over the United States and around the world. Sylvia's is a frequent stop for celebrities and politicians. With the launch of a line of prepared supermarket foods, the empire of restaurateur Sylvia Woods has expanded to touch the culinary lives of people all over the country.

Woods herself has a remarkable story that encapsulates much of 20th-century African-American history. She was born Sylvia Pressley in Hemingway, South Carolina, on February 2, 1926. Her father, Van Pressley, died three days after she was born from the after effects of chemical-weapons injuries he sustained while fighting in World War I. When she was three her mother departed for New York City in search of a chance to make money that would put her family on a solid financial footing.

Woods recalled with affection the warmth and closeness of her rural southern community. Nevertheless, she has painful memories. "I didn't like any part of farm life," she told Nation's Restaurant News. "I didn't understand why people would not let me drink out of the same water fountain, but they would trust me to cook for them and to take care of their dearest things, their babies." Her grandfather was hanged after being wrongly accused of participating in a grocery-store robbery when her mother was just an infant.

Sylvia Woods worked in a Queens hat factory for a time, as well, but a turning point came in 1954 when a cousin told Woods that she planned to quit her job at a lunch counter at 126th Street and Lenox Avenue, around the corner from the famed Apollo Theater and within walking distance of the Woods's 131st Street apartment. Woods, who had rarely even seen the inside of a restaurant, took the job with trepidation and without any thought of ever running one herself. But she impressed the owner, a fellow South Carolinian, with her energy. When he ran into financial trouble with an investment in a black resort in upstate New York, he offered to sell her the restaurant. After her mother took out a \$20,000 loan backed by her family farm, Sylvia Woods became the owner of Johnson's Luncheonette in 1962.

With four children, Van, Bedelia, Kenneth, and Crizette, born between 1949 and 1967, Woods had little time to think of expansion, but Sylvia's became known far and wide for its fried chicken, collard greens, peach pies, and other soul-food standards. The restaurant moved two doors down from its original location in 1968 and gradually grew to occupy most of the Harlem block on which it rests. Sylvia's now can seat 450 and boasts a next-door catering operation.

Diners suggested that Sylvia's open new branches in other cities, but Woods and her son, Van, decided on a different course—one inspired by the customers who would come in at holiday time with empty jars and ask whether they could buy Sylvia's barbecue sauce.

Launched in 1992 and featuring a picture of Woods herself on the label, the Sylvia's

Queen of Soul Food line of canned and bottled foods impressed Pathmark supermarket CEO Jim Donald. He told Crain's New York Business that "Sylvia and Van Woods run their company with their heart and soul." Sylvia's hot sauces, candied yams, mustard greens, kidney beans, and 13 other items are available in supermarkets nationwide.

Sylvia's Soul Food cookbook was also published in 1992. It was followed in 1999 by the more extensive Sylvia's Family Soul Food Cookbook, which included Woods's personal reminiscences and numerous family photographs along with recipes gathered in a giant South Carolina family cook-off.

The good reputation of the "Sylvia's" name has put Sylvia Woods's cookery on a path to growth, with the restaurant's many admirers hoping to get in on the action. Additional full-service restaurants are planned for the future, increasing the Sylvia's stable of 200 employees and bringing the soul-food creations of Hemingway, South Carolina, to even more American diners. With all four Woods children involved with the business, it represents a family tradition of the best—and tastiest—kind.

Madam Speaker, please join me in honoring South Carolina's own, mother, restaurateur and enterprising businesswoman, Mrs. Sylvia Woods.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1585, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1585, the Conference Report on Defense Authorization Bill.

As we approach the Holiday Season and we go back to our families, we cannot forget that not everyone is so fortunate.

Our loyal soldiers are serving proudly and not all will be with their loved ones.

I want to speak directly to them and to their families in my District because these are the true faces of the war.

This bill supports our service members by increasing military pay across the board, because the empty stomachs of a family hurt no matter where you are.

This bill protects our soldiers by providing the equipment needed, because today—our soldiers deserve the best there is.

This bill includes the Wounded Warrior Act which reinforces the fact that the tragic conditions at Walter Reed must end.

I ask my colleagues to not ignore the realities of the war and review their priorities—we must give our troops on the frontline what they need and rightfully deserve.

VETERANS GUARANTEED BONUS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 17, 2007

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3793, the Veterans Guarante-

teed Bonus Act of 2007. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation because I believe the men and women who bravely serve our country deserve everything they are promised when they sign up for the military. This bill ensures those forced to leave military service because of a combat injury will receive the bonuses they are entitled to. Moreover, this bill recognizes that the men and women injured in battle, in Iraq and Afghanistan, would much rather be with their brothers and sisters in the field than in a hospital nursing their wounds. The least we can do is afford them with the benefits, pay, and assistance to which they are already entitled.

I would like to thank Congressman ALTMIRE for his tireless work on this legislation. It is a fine example of how the Democratic Congress is keeping its promises to our dedicated men and women valiantly fighting on behalf of our country. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act.

RECOGNIZING LINDA KITAZAKI

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, heroes are people who devote their lives to serving others and making our world a better place in which to live. Linda Kitazaki was one of those people.

Linda was the executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Southeast Texas. I knew her for over 20 years in my work as a judge in Texas. She was an advocate in every sense of the word who worked passionately to fulfill MADD's vision to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and prevent underage drinking. Those who know her best describe her as compassionate, powerful, gracious and inspirational.

Linda became affiliated with MADD back in 1988 because of a near fatal crash involving teenagers who were drinking and driving. The situation was especially troublesome to Linda because the teenagers had been given alcohol by a parent. Because of her dedication to making a difference, she became the Administrator for the Harris County Chapter of MADD.

With the assistance of Penny Ellsworth, who joined MADD because her son was killed by a drunk driver, the two reorganized the Harris County Chapter.

MADD Harris County became the Southeast Texas Region Affiliate Office. With Linda at the helm, the small office grew to serve 10 counties and became one of the most prominent within the organization. Not only does the office provide services to the victims of drunk drivers, it also conducts outreach and education in order to prevent future tragedies. The idea of preventing young people from making bad decisions that would impact them for the rest of their lives truly resonated with Linda.

As a result of Linda's leadership, her MADD office became very strong and has 10 staff members and countless volunteers. She started new programs and initiatives. She was considered a maverick in new fundraising methods in the Houston area which were then replicated for national success in the organization. Her passion and commitment won her Employee of the Year recognition.